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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ STUDY GROUP REPORT, TAIWAN'S MAYORAL  
ELECTIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus their coverage December 13 on the aftermath of Saturday's Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral elections, and on alleged vote-buying in Kaohsiung. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a commentary in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the Iraq Study Group Report, saying that the report will not become an internal consensus of the United States, but it will become a point of reference for future debates. With regard to Saturday's mayoral elections, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou's quandary in the wake of the elections. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said the election results "sent a ringing message" to hostile China. End summary.

## 12. Iraq Study Group Report

"Iraq Study Group Report Will Be Unable to Become a Consensus"

James Tu, president of the "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000], commented in his paper (12/13):

"... The final key lies in the Executive Branch. President Bush and his national security team obviously have their own plan. They don't want to criticize the Iraq Study Group Report in the face, but they turned down some of the ideas raised in the report in a zigzag manner. Now Bush is closely monitoring reactions from all sides on the one hand and on the other hand is demanding that his own national security team come up with a new assessment report on Iraq.

It is expected that Bush cannot possibly agree to the entire plan proposed by James Baker and his team, but he would probably adopt some of the ideas in the report. For Bush, the worst situation is over, after all. All political figures are now eying the 2008 elections, while Bush is the only one who has no such pressure. He wants to make the best use of the remaining two years of his term to direct Iraq and the Middle East onto the track he desires, and he wants to consider calmly his place in history.

"The Iraq Study Group Report will not become an internal consensus of the United States. But no matter whether a consensus is formed, this report will become a point of reference for future debates after all; it is regarded as a success simply based on this point. James Baker and others [who worked on the report] should be able to congratulate themselves for not having worked in vain over the past nine months.

## 13. Taiwan's Mayoral Elections

A) "Ma Ying-jeou's Quandary: Is It a Trap or a Niche [Pigeonhole]?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (12/13):

"Ma Ying-jeou was badly injured in Saturday's [mayoral] elections. The worst injury he suffered was people's questioning of his 'ability' and sneering at his inflexible moral burdens and the shackles of rule of law that he wears. ... The quandary Ma is in today is in reality a quandary facing Taiwan's politics. On the one hand, Taiwan people are generally aware that less shrewdness, less dishonesty, and fewer schemes are the one and only cure for Taiwan, and perhaps this is the reason why many people place their hopes in Ma. But on the other hand, many Taiwan people also believe that there is no way morality and rule of law can possibly cope with the bitter and severe political struggles in Taiwan. They believe that under the circumstances, while one's rivals are both crafty and dishonest, the burdens of morality and the shackles of rule of law are analogous to 'inability' or 'incompetence.' This is probably why many people are disappointed with or have sneered at Ma. A distinct contrast that is worth pondering is that during the mayoral elections, almost no one called Chen Shui-bian 'incompetent,' while Ma was generally questioned and sneered at by people as being 'incompetent.' ...

"In reality, there are two origins for Ma's real limitations: First, he is a second-generation Mainlander, and second, [he carries] the KMT's historical burdens. Political figures like Chen, who is corrupt in every way he can be and who has caused his country to stagnate, can only possibly appear in the Green camp, yet the public generally identifies him as a representative of 'nativist values.' By contrast, Ma's mainland Chinese origin and his KMT label bar him from any attempt to engage in chicanery or be dishonest; should he play such tricks, it will only turn his image into something like 'Chinese pigs.' Thus, it is actually not merely Ma's nature that makes him the way he is today - deep in a trap; it is in reality also due to his unavoidable 'historical/social' niche [pigeonhole]. ..."

#### B) "Message for PRC in Mayoral Polls" ELECTIONS

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (12/13):

"The ability of the governing Democratic Progressive Party to win the mayoralty of Kaohsiung City by a razor-thin margin and boost its vote share in Taipei City sent a ringing message to the hostile People's Republic of China regime while frustrating the attempt by the former ruling Kuomintang to turn the poll into a 'no-confidence' vote on embattled President Chen Shui-bian. ... Voters, especially in southern Taiwan's metropolis, rejected the KMT's hypocritical definition of the poll as an 'action against corruption' and refused to allow the DPP to lose Kaohsiung, an event which would surely have been interpreted by the local and the international press as a signal that the 'pro-unification' KMT would win back presidential power in March 2008. In addition, this hefty share of the electorate simultaneously demonstrated their rejection of siren calls by KMT candidates, notably in Kaohsiung, for full liberalization of 'direct links' in marine and sea transportation as the panacea to Taiwan's economic pains. ...

"The 2008 presidential election will be very much significant not only for the DPP but also for the KMT and CCP. It will be a battle for the rivalry between Taiwanese consciousness and Chinese consciousness. The victory of either side will mark the direction that Taiwanese people choose to go. Moreover, the international community has also a major stake in the results, which will determine whether Taiwan and its 23 million people remain in the world democratic community or begin a slide into the sphere of influence of the authoritarian PRC regime. In this regard, the United States has a responsibility as the main leader of the world democratic community to protect the fair democratic transformation of Taiwan and ensure that our people can determine their own political direction and fate free of the fear of the threat of force or the use of force by the PRC. ..."

YOUNG